





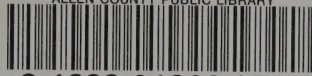


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# FORT McHENRY



*"O'er the land of the free"*



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Stewart L. Udall, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*

***HISTORICAL HANDBOOK NUMBER FIVE***

This publication is one of a series of handbooks describing the historical and archeological areas in the National Park System. It is printed by the Government Printing Office, and may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C.

Price 75 cents

Stock Number 024-005-00191-3

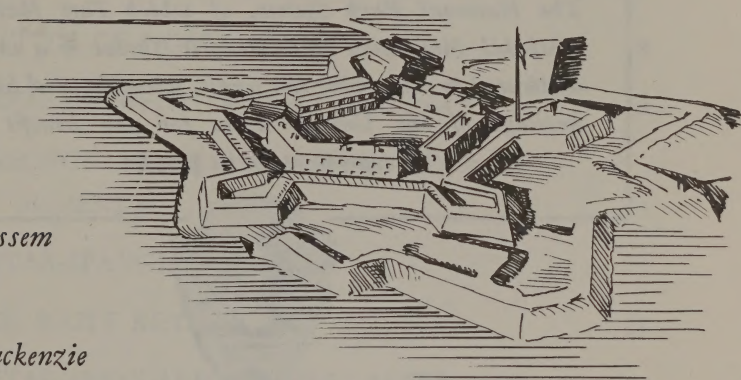
Catalog Number I 29.58:5



# FORT McHENRY

*National Monument and Historic Shrine*

Maryland



by

*Harold I. Lessem*

and

*George C. Mackenzie*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HISTORICAL HANDBOOK SERIES No. 5

Washington, D.C., 1954  
Reprint 1961

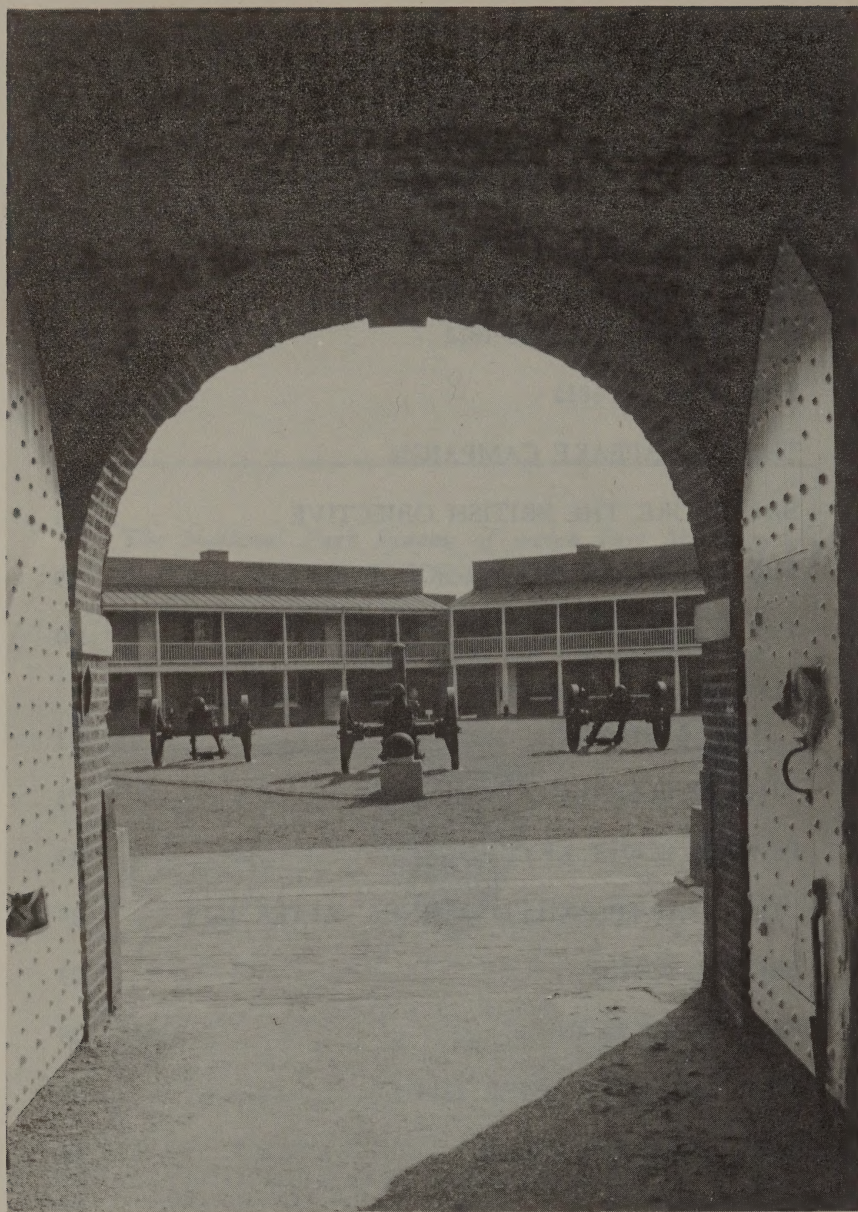
*The National Park System, of which Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.*





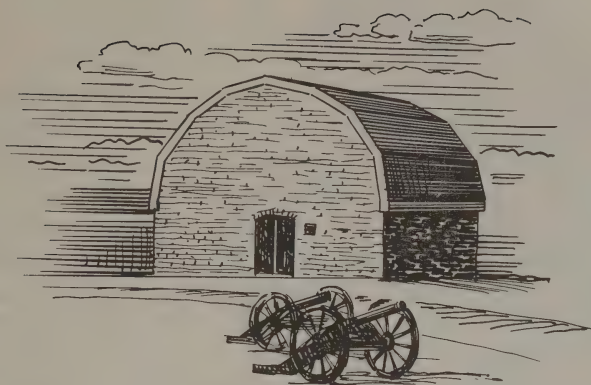
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*The interior of Fort McHenry as seen through the sally port.*





**F**ORT MCHENRY occupies a preeminent position among the historic shrines and monuments of our country by reason of its special meaning in American history. It was a glimpse of the American flag waving defiantly over the ramparts of Fort McHenry that inspired Francis Scott Key to compose our national anthem.

*Here, where the flag flies day and night, the Stars and Stripes attains a special significance for Americans. Here on these historic ramparts the visitor can sense and appreciate that surge of inspiration, born amid the welter of bursting bombs and blazing rockets, which compelled Francis Scott Key to create a classic expression of American ideals and patriotism. Here is symbolized the triumph of American arms and valor over a foreign invader.*

*Fort Whetstone, 1776–97; Fort McHenry, 1798–1812*

The tip of a narrow peninsula, called Whetstone Point, was considered of great strategic value for the defense of Baltimore as early as the Revolutionary War. The peninsula separated the North West Branch and the Ferry Branch of the Patapsco River. (Now, North West Branch is called Northwest Harbor, and Ferry Branch is part of the main estuary of the Patapsco River.) Since all port facilities for Baltimore were on the North West Branch, which was regarded as the city's harbor, the important value of the point could not be overlooked in any plan to erect defenses to guard the water approaches to the city.

During the Revolutionary War, the Provincial Convention of Maryland directed its standing committee, the Council of Safety, to provide for the defenses of Baltimore. A group of local patriots agreed to undertake the project, and on March 16, 1776, they reported to the Council that, "Our fort at Whetstone is ready to mount 8 guns and we shall use every

exertion to expedite it." Although the fort never came under enemy fire, it deterred the British cruisers which operated in Chesapeake Bay from molesting Baltimore. In 1781, Fort Whetstone, as the defense works were then called, consisted of a battery, magazine, military hospital, and barracks. The scattered ordnance returns indicate that the types and numbers of cannon emplaced at the fort changed frequently.

The successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War and the adoption of the Federal Constitution did not bring the expected freedom from affairs in Europe. Relations with England were strained and both nations were frequently on the verge of armed conflict. Alarmed for the safety of the chief commercial city of Maryland, the House of Delegates, in 1793, passed a resolution authorizing the Governor of the State, upon application of "the President, to grant permission to the Federal Government to erect a fort, arsenal or other military works" on Whetstone Point. Congress, in March of the following year, enacted legislation to fortify the principal seaports of the young republic, and, in the funds appropriated for this purpose, was \$4,225.44 for the erection of a 20-gun battery and small redoubt to defend Baltimore.

John Jacob Ulrich Rivardi, an experienced artilleryman and military engineer, was directed by the Secretary of War to visit the city, draw up plans for a permanent harbor defense, select a qualified individual to execute them, and then proceed to Norfolk on a similar mission. He was also ordered to forward a copy of his plans to the Governor of the State and to submit to his authority.

Rivardi found conditions in Baltimore extremely favorable. Governor Lee was cooperative, the local citizenry were zealous to assist, and, of utmost importance, the quality of the soil on Whetstone Point was ideal for erecting batteries. The small appropriation, however, compelled Rivardi to limit his recommendations to measures designed to improve the existing defense works, which consisted of an upper and lower battery and an imperfectly designed redoubt which he termed a star fort. Samuel Dodge was appointed to supervise the program, which he accomplished after a fashion, mainly with voluntary labor performed by the residents of the city.

In 1798, Maj. Louis Tousard was ordered to survey the existing defense works and submit recommendations for their improvement. He regarded as insufficient the \$20,000 allotted for this purpose, and, rather than risk his professional reputation, he turned his plans over to a committee of local citizens who agreed to raise an additional \$10,963.44 by popular subscription and to supervise the program.

It is probable that the present star fort, located to the rear of the Revolutionary works, was erected during this period. A report of the Secretary of War, dated 1806, mentions that Fort McHenry was a "regular fortification of mason work, with batteries, magazines, and barracks, erected principally in years 1798, 1799, 1800." This view is further con-



*James McHenry.*



firmed by the fact that the largest appropriations for Fort McHenry were voted for these 3 years.

Shortly before the turn of the century, James McHenry, Secretary of War and a resident of Baltimore, was honored by the bestowal of his name on the fort. McHenry was born at Ballymena, County Antrim, Ireland, on November 16, 1753. In 1771, he immigrated to Philadelphia, where he studied medicine. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he volunteered for service in the Continental Army. During his army career he served first as a surgeon and later as a secretary to George Washington. After the war, McHenry became active in Maryland politics and represented the State at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. An avowed Federalist, he served as Secretary of War from 1796 to 1800, when he resigned after a dispute with President Adams.

From its completion to the outbreak of the War of 1812, the history of the fort is routine and uneventful. The organization, in 1808, of the first mobile horse-drawn artillery unit in the United States Army by Capt. George Peter at the direction of the Secretary of War is the most interesting event to occur at Fort McHenry during this period. The

carriages and limbers for the two 6-pound pieces used were constructed by the garrison artificers.

## *The War of 1812*

In 1793, England entered the war against France, and for the next 22 years both countries were locked in a desperate life-and-death struggle into which this country was drawn. In addition to regular military campaigns, both countries waged economic warfare by proclaiming blockades and other trade-restricting devices. These measures interfered with the commerce of nonbelligerents, and they were especially irritating to the United States, which then possessed the largest and most active neutral trading fleet.

Although the United States had serious controversies with both England and France, the former became the chief target of our resentment, because the unchallenged superiority of the Royal Navy enabled her to enforce rigidly her blockades. American exasperation was further intensified by the manner in which the Royal Navy discharged this duty. British warships patrolled our shores and frequently intercepted American vessels in American territorial waters. Our ships were ordered to distant admiralty courts for adjudication. Many Americans were also embittered by the superior attitude, haughty demeanor, and arbitrary decisions of British officers.

Impressment was another fertile source of friction. Because of the meager pay, harsh discipline, and brutal life in the British Navy, desertion was widespread. As a means to maintain the necessary quota of seamen, England claimed the right to halt American vessels and remove both suspected deserters and former subjects of His Majesty, although the latter, in American eyes, had legally acquired American citizenship. Our Government continually protested against this practice, both on principle and on the grounds that American citizens were forcibly removed by the press gang and compelled to serve aboard foreign warships.

From 1793 to 1812, this country attempted to define and secure recognition of its neutral rights by diplomacy. To avoid friction, embargoes and nonintercourse acts were enacted, but with indifferent success. The lack of military strength and the split in public opinion regarding the propriety of declaring war against England precluded armed hostilities.

If the East was reluctant to go to war, the West and South, where a strong anti-British sentiment prevailed, felt no such restraint. A strong expansionist feeling grasped the land-hungry settlers along the Canadian and Florida borders. They talked of occupying Canada and acquiring Florida, a province of England's ally, Spain. In addition, the West and



South, in 1812, were experiencing a depression, a decline in the fur trade, and trouble with the Indians. In the popular mind, England was directly responsible for these difficulties.

These sections sent to Congress young, aggressive, and vigorous representatives, who, by 1812, gained control of Congress. Labeled "War Hawks" because of their martial ardor, they were skillfully led by Henry Clay, Felix Grundy, and John C. Calhoun. In response to a message from President Madison, the War Hawks succeeded in forcing a declaration of war against England through a wavering Congress, in June 1812.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the military unpreparedness of the United States in 1812. The country was gravely deficient in arms and equipment. The army was small, disorganized, badly trained, and lacking leadership. The Navy, consisting of a handful of ships, was asked to contend with a rival which was the undisputed master of the seven seas. New England, bitterly opposed to the war, refused to furnish its share of manpower and financial support, and Congress committed a most serious blunder by failing to pass legislation for the vigorous prosecution of the war.

### *The Chesapeake Campaign*

Since the bulk of its army was committed to Wellington's Peninsular Campaign, England was compelled to rely principally upon its navy to vanquish the United States. Late in 1812, His Majesty's Government proclaimed a blockade of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, and by 1813 the former had been practically converted into a British lake. Under the energetic and ruthless leadership of Rear Admiral George Cockburn, naval detachments raided many of the towns on the Bay and harried their residents. The only opposition to the British was offered by Commodore Joshua Barney's small flotilla of barges and gunboats.

In the summer of 1814, the enemy fleet in the Bay was augmented and placed under the command of Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane. In addition, the capitulation of Napoleon permitted the War Office to transfer four battle-hardened regiments from the Continent to cooperate with the fleet. Cockburn took this opportunity to advise the army commander, Maj. Gen. Robert Ross, of the defenseless state of the city of Washington, and he urged him to take advantage of the situation.

On August 19, Ross disembarked his forces at Benedict, on the Patuxent River, and on the next day moved his troops slowly toward Washington. In the meantime, a naval party under Cockburn ascended the river and compelled the Americans to burn the remnants of Barney's flotilla. At Upper Marlboro, Ross was joined by Cockburn's naval detachment, and on August 24 the combined force resumed its slow march toward the Capital.

At Bladensburg, the British encountered the army of raw militia which Brig. Gen. William Winder had hastily collected for the defense of Washington. The Battle of Bladensburg represents the nadir of American military effort during the War of 1812. The inexperienced troops, confused by vague and contradictory orders and demoralized by inept leadership, were easily brushed aside by the experienced British regiments. That evening the enemy entered Washington. After a brief period of occupation, during which the Federal buildings were destroyed, Ross moved his troops back to their transports.

Ross and Cochrane then remained for several days off the Patuxent awaiting the return of the warships, which had been detached on special missions. The most successful of these was the feat of Captain Gordon, who led several vessels up the Potomac, collected what amounted to a ransom from the city of Alexandria, and returned safely despite the frequent American efforts to intercept this small squadron.

When all the scattered units had returned, Cochrane ordered the vessels to set sail, and the fleet moved northward up the bay. On September 11, the British dropped anchor at the mouth of the Patapsco just 13 miles below Baltimore, which was their next objective.

### *Baltimore, the British Objective*

From the British point of view, Baltimore, which was larger, wealthier, and more important commercially than Washington, presented a more desirable objective than the Capital. If successful, they could sequester the contents of the loaded warehouses, seize the three American warships nearing completion, and destroy the shipyards which were outfitting privateers. Aside from these materialistic considerations, Cochrane and Ross were not adverse to punishing a city which was a hotbed of anti-British sentiment and from whose harbor had sailed many of the privateers which were successfully raiding British commerce.

Unlike Washington, however, Baltimore was not defenseless. Under the leadership of Maj. Gen. Samuel Smith, merchant, politician, and veteran of the Revolutionary War, it had been preparing for the expected British attack. Smith was far too practical to rely upon the ineffectual Federal Government. He contrived to secure arms, ammunition, and equipment from the Secretary of War and the Governor of the State. He directed the repair of old batteries and the erection of new ones. Militia units were called up for training and brief tours of duty. The expenses incurred by these defense preparations were defrayed by a local committee which had raised \$500,000 by popular subscription and loan.

In 1813, this committee had advanced more than \$40,000 to the Federal Government for the repair of Fort McHenry. The earthen ram-





*Rear Admiral George Cockburn.* From Brenton's Naval History.

parts of the outer batteries were repaired, and the defective wooden gun platforms and carriages replaced. General Smith, with the consent of the French consul, removed the guns from a French warship in the harbor and had them emplaced at the fort. He also arranged for the installation of furnaces to heat shot. Artillery companies were sent to the fort to reinforce the garrison. Two small works were erected on the Ferry Branch to protect the rear of Fort McHenry, and a small battery was set up at Lazaretto to help protect the entrance to the North West Branch.

Late in August 1814, when a British attack appeared inevitable, a special Committee of Vigilance and Safety was created. This committee raised money to purchase supplies, provided aid to the needy and medical care for the sick soldiers, guarded against defeatism, and maintained law and order in the city. Of utmost importance, it mobilized all citizens not subject to military service for work on defenses. Under its direction a long line of strong entrenchments was erected to guard the eastern approaches to the city.

To defend Baltimore, Smith had at his disposal a force of 12,000, consisting chiefly of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia militia, some regular army units, and about 400 sailors under Commodore John Rodgers. Reports of the conduct of the untrained militia at Bladensburg



ADMIRAL COCKBURN BURNING & PLUNDERING HAVRE DE GRACE  
on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1813. done from a Sketch taken on the Spot at the time.

1. Cockburn  
2. Captain 1<sup>st</sup> Line of the Marlborough  
3. Woburn, Cap<sup>l</sup> of Marines.

5. Machine for drawing Rocks  
6. A Gun Couch part of the Plunder.  
7. M<sup>rs</sup> Neaves Town



did not escape Smith's attention, and he decided to wage a strong defensive action. On September 11, an alarm sounded, warning the citizens of Baltimore that the British fleet had reached the Patapsco. Smith immediately ordered Brig. Gen. John Stricker to lead his brigade toward North Point to intercept the British. His final defense measure was to direct Rodgers to sink vessels across the entrances to both branches of the river.

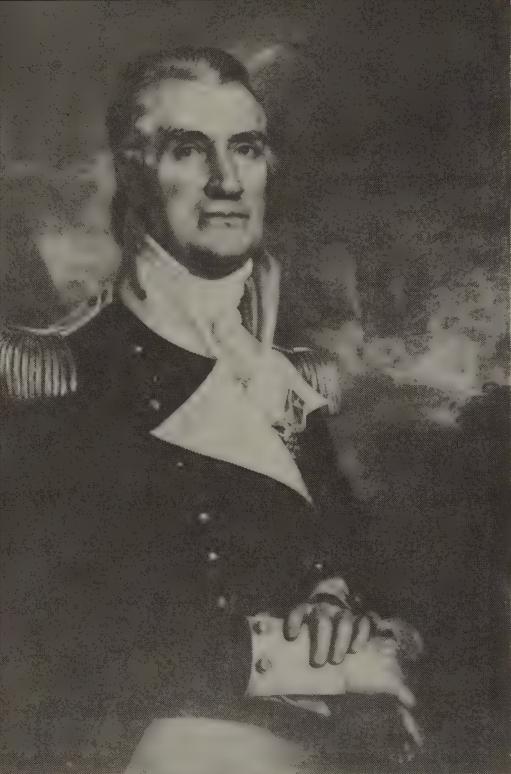
### *The Battle of North Point*

The British strategy for the capture of Baltimore envisaged a joint land and naval attack on the city. On the morning of September 12, 1814, the troops, reinforced by the naval and marine detachments under Rear Admiral Cockburn, disembarked and began to move rapidly along the road toward Baltimore. An American defense line, unfinished and unguarded, was soon overrun. After proceeding about 5 miles, the advance elements made contact with a party of American riflemen, and in the ensuing skirmish General Ross was mortally wounded. The command devolved upon Col. Arthur Brooke who, in the opinion of a fellow officer, was "better calculated to lead a battalion, than to guide an army." Resuming their advance, the British army soon encountered the main body of Stricker's brigade drawn up along a line which Stricker had skillfully selected.

Brooke's tactics were designed to envelop both flanks of the American line, with the heaviest pressure being exerted initially on Stricker's left. As soon as he became aware of Brooke's intention, Stricker moved two regiments and additional artillery to the threatened sector. His plan to wage a determined defensive action was completely upset, however, when the unit on the extreme left, the fifty-first regiment, "delivered one random fire and retreated precipitately. . . ." Although the panic spread to a few companies, the balance of the American force stood fast in the face of the approaching enemy until Stricker ordered them to fall back on the regiment which he held in reserve. The brigade retired in good order, and in compliance with arrangements previously made with Smith, Stricker posted his brigade on the left, half a mile in advance of the main defense lines of Baltimore.

Brooke spent the night on the battlefield, and on the following morning advanced his troops within 2 miles of the city, where they halted to await the naval cooperation deemed necessary for the successful occupation of Baltimore.

*Early print of British raid on Havre de Grace, June 1, 1813.*  
Courtesy Maryland Historical Society.



*Gen. Samuel Smith.*  
Courtesy Peale Museum.

*Gen. John Stricker.*  
Courtesy Enoch Pratt Library.



It is interesting to note that the British at North Point used rockets in addition to artillery pieces, but in the final analysis it was their superiority in numbers and experience which carried the day.

### *The Bombardment of Fort McHenry*

To render effective assistance to Brooke's army, it was necessary for Cochrane to reduce Fort McHenry, which barred the entrance to Baltimore harbor. At dawn on September 13, 16 warships, including five bomb ships and one sloop equipped with rocket launchers, dropped anchor about 2 miles below the fort and commenced an intensive bombardment. The Americans responded with a brisk fire, but, much to their disappointment, their shot and shell fell short. The superior range of the 13-inch sea mortars on the bomb ships, reported Maj. George Armistead, commander of Fort McHenry, exposed the garrison "to a



constant and tremendous shower of shells.” In the early afternoon, a bomb landed on the southwest bastion of the fort, dismounting a gun and inflicting casualties on the crew. During the excitement, three bomb ships approached the fort but were quickly driven off by the Americans.

In its description of the action on the 13th, *Niles' Weekly Register* wrote that “Four and five bombs were frequently in the air at a time, and, making a double explosion, with the noise of the foolish rockets and the firings of the fort, . . . created a horrible clatter.” Armistead’s report of the action on this day omits any mention of rockets, thus making it difficult to discuss the role played by the rocket ship, H. M. S. *Erebus*.

The critical period of the attack developed shortly after midnight when a picked British force under Captain Napier penetrated the branch of the river to the right (west) of the fort. Their mission, Armistead believed, was to storm the fort. Before they could land, however, they were detected and subjected to a withering fire from the guns of Fort McHenry and the two smaller works, Forts Babcock and Covington. The British fought back strongly with cannon and rockets. In the inky darkness, the Americans trained their weapons by the muzzle blasts of the enemy guns and the blaze of their rockets. Gradually, American fire power prevailed, and Napier was compelled to retire to the warships, safely anchored beyond the range of even the 42-pound cannon of the fort.

The British repulse impelled Admiral Cochrane to suspend the attack. A messenger was dispatched to Colonel Brooke to inform him of the admiral’s decision and to advise him to move his troops back to the transports. Brooke, confronted with the perplexing problem of attacking a city defended by powerful entrenchments and manned by troops superior in numbers to the English, hastily accepted Cochrane’s advice.

After a final bombardment, which lasted until 7 o’clock on the morning of the 14th, the fleet got under way and moved down river. Thus the fort, by denying the British access to the North West Branch, had frustrated the British strategy for the capture of Baltimore. The failure to take Baltimore also strengthened the position of the American peace negotiators at Ghent.

Armistead estimated that the British had hurled between 1,500 and 1,800 shells at the fort, of which number about 400 landed within the defense works. Two of the buildings were severely damaged, the others received slight injury. The casualty list was amazingly small. Of the 1,000 defenders, only 4 were killed and 24 injured. The appearance of the fort after the attack is picturesquely described in an entry of the *Orderly Book* of the Lebanon Blues which mentions that:

The captain was at Fort McHenry and reports it is all cut up Round about it—he brought A piece of the bumb shell with him—he further says that there is some so large that they weigh 200 lbs.



**A FLEET OF THE ROYAL NAVY OF PORT ARTHUR,** near Baltimore, by the English fleet, taken from the Chinese, under the command of Commodore Cockburn on the morning of the 23<sup>d</sup> Sep. 1855, which lasted 24 hours, &c. &c. Brown from south-west. At 6 in the night attempted to land by firing a 24 pounder up the reef which was repulsed with great loss. E. Perry and Port.

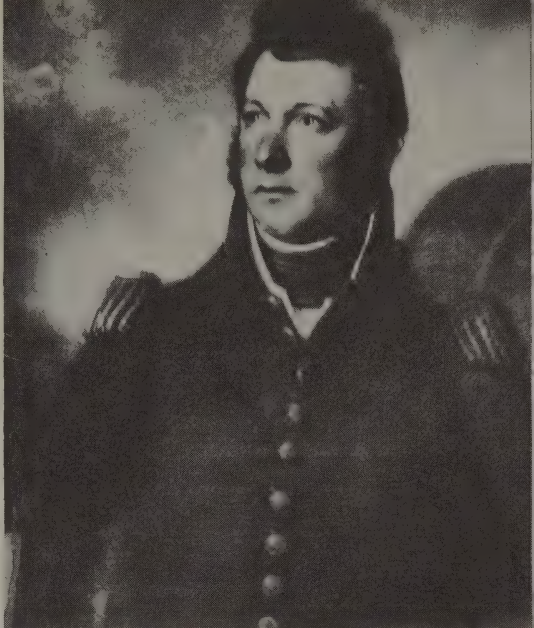
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(*Hyperic. n.*)  
Pays de France.

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*Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane.*  
From Brenton's Naval History.



*Maj. George Armistead as brevet lieutenant colonel, 1814–18.*  
Courtesy Peale Museum.

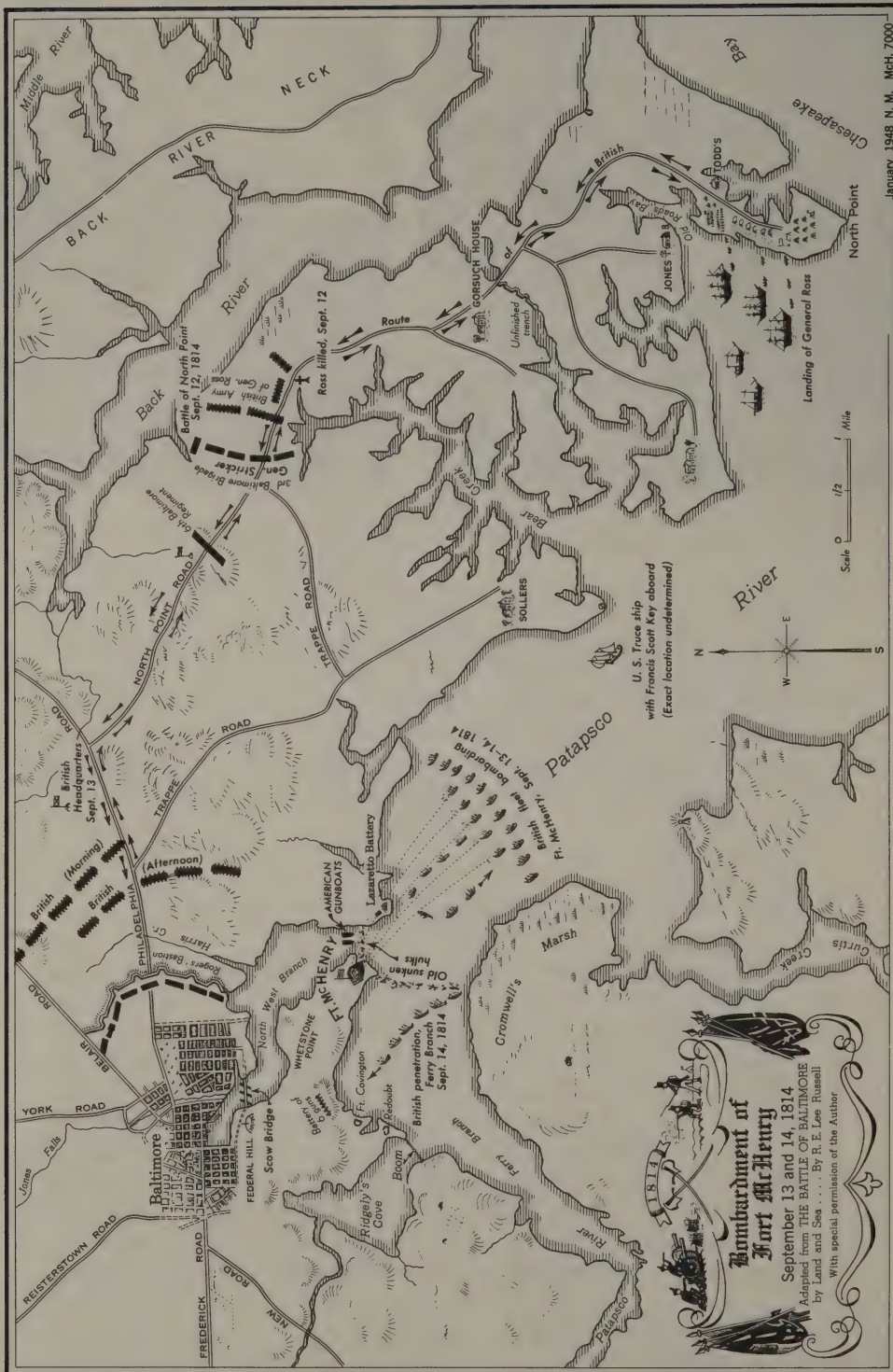
Measures were immediately undertaken to repair and strengthen the fort. The Committee of Vigilance and Safety was asked to furnish heavy timbers to build a covered way and brick to strengthen the magazines and erect bombproofs. It was also asked to repair those gun carriages which had failed to withstand the shock of recoil. Above all, Armistead stressed the need for 13-inch mortars and appropriate shells.

### *Maj. George Armistead, Commander of Fort McHenry*

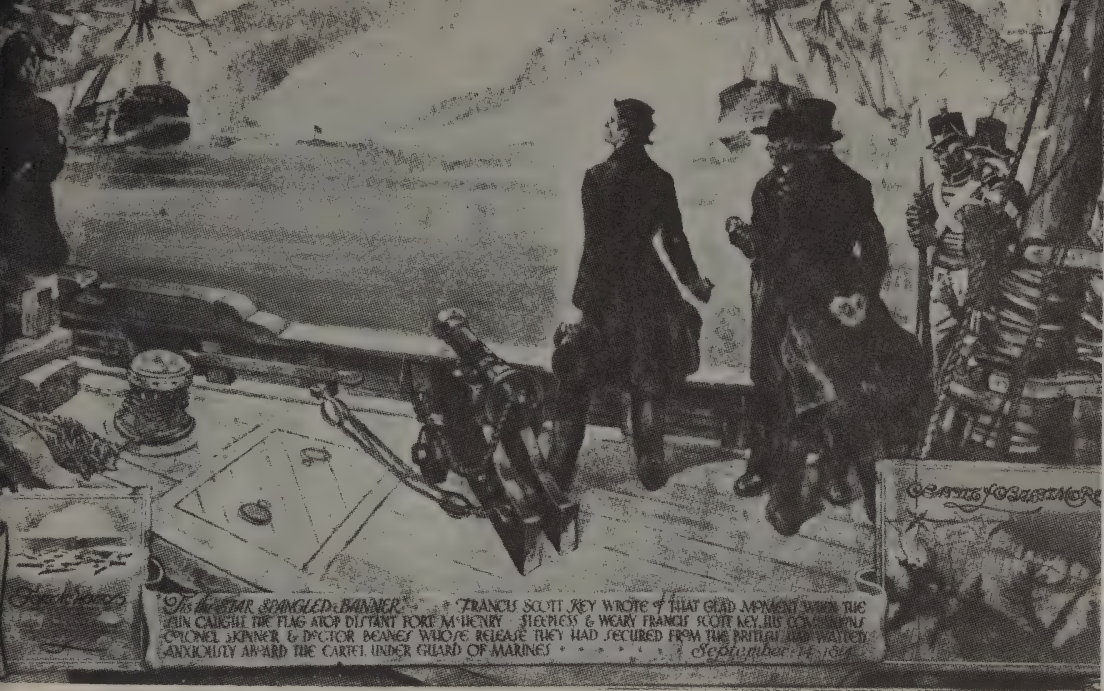
George Armistead was born in New Market, Caroline County, Va., on April 10, 1780. He began his military career at the age of 19, when President Adams commissioned him a second lieutenant in the United States Army. The first 13 years of Armistead's military life were uneventful, and in the small peacetime army promotions came slowly. He entered the War of 1812 as a captain in the artillery and on March 13, 1813, received his majority. Armistead promptly justified this promotion by his distinguished conduct in the capture of Fort George in Upper Canada. The War Department then ordered him to Baltimore, where he was placed in charge of Fort McHenry. Armistead was especially energetic in his preparations for the impending British attack and,

*Early print of the bombardment of Fort McHenry.*  
Courtesy Maryland Historical Society.





**Bombardment of Fort M'Henry**  
September 13 and 14, 1814  
Adapted from THE BATTLE OF BALTIMORE  
by Lord and Sea . . . . By R. E. Lee Russell  
With special permission of the Author



"'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner." Mural by George Gray.

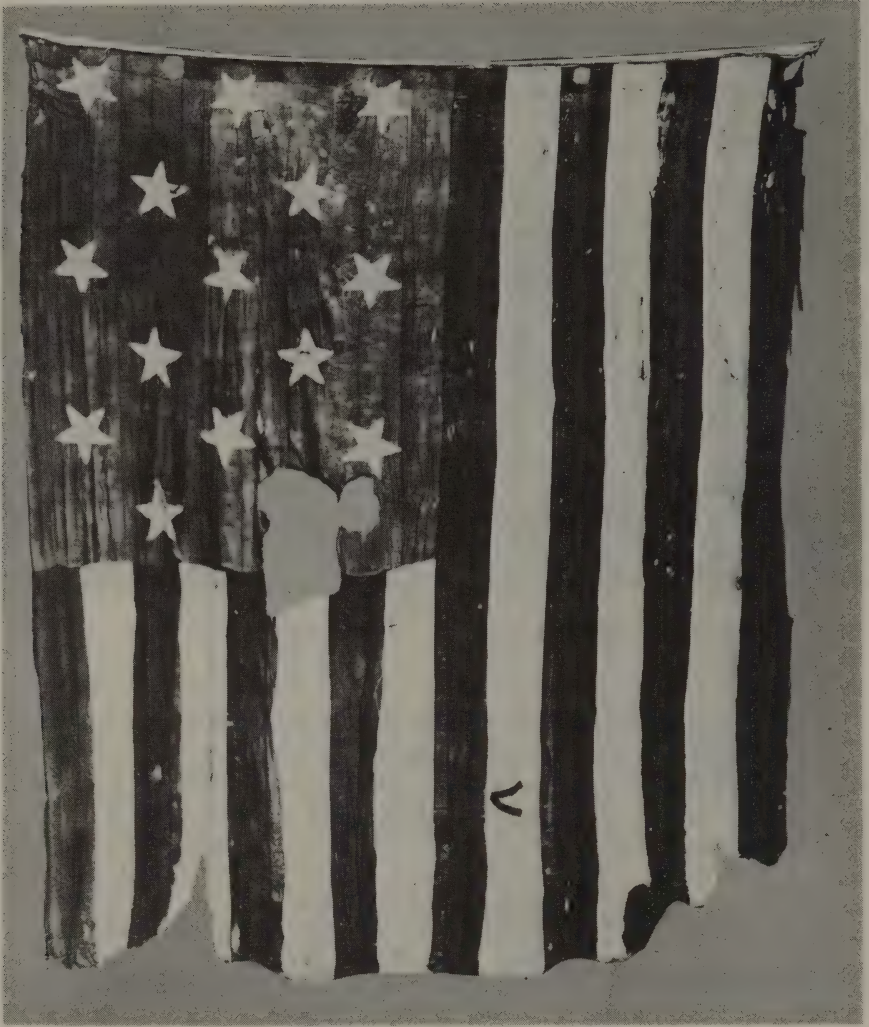
though very ill, supplied the leadership which enabled the fort successfully to withstand the bombardment. For this feat, Armistead was brevetted a lieutenant colonel. Armistead never recovered his health, and after a lingering illness he died on April 25, 1818.

### "The Star-Spangled Banner"

"The Star-Spangled Banner" was written in a time of great national crisis. The Capital of the United States had fallen to the enemy. Its most important Federal buildings were charred ruins in the wake of the British occupation. There seemed to be nothing separating Britain's vaunted military power from complete victory, except the small bodies of scattered and disorganized militia. American morale was at a low ebb. It required a bold man at that time to prophesy the spiritual rebirth of the American Nation as Francis Scott Key did in "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The long chain of fortuitous circumstances which combined to inspire Key to produce his masterpiece began with the British occupation of Upper Marlboro, Md., shortly before the battle of Bladensburg. At Upper Marlboro, General Ross, the commander of the British Army, established temporary headquarters at the home of Dr. William Beanes, a respected and prominent resident, who was required to give an oath of good behavior to the English.





*This is the flag which flew over the fort during the attack and which Francis Scott Key saw by "dawn's early light." Its original dimensions were 42 x 30 feet. The official flag of our country from 1795 to 1818 had 15 stars and 15 stripes. The flag is displayed in the United States National Museum. Courtesy United States National Museum.*

The British remained only a short time at Upper Marlboro. Then they moved on to the battle of Bladensburg and to Washington. After the occupation of Washington the British returned, and once more Dr. Beanes was made acutely aware of their presence. According to family tradition, Dr. Beanes was entertaining some of his friends when the privacy of his home was suddenly intruded upon by three British strag-



glers. The argument that ensued between the Americans and the soldiers resulted in the arrest of the stragglers and their detention in the local jail on a charge of disturbing the peace. Other accounts, both English and American, state that Dr. Beanes placed himself at the head of a group of Upper Marlboro residents, who pursued English stragglers and captured three for imprisonment in the local jail.

One of the three escaped and reported the incident to the commander of a British scouting party. The latter considered that by this unfriendly act the doctor had violated his pledge to the English. Forthwith, a patrol of soldiers was dispatched to Dr. Beanes' house. They placed him under arrest, then escorted him to the British base on the Patuxent and turned him over to Admiral Cochrane. Thus a chain of events was set in operation which was indirectly responsible for the situation which brought about the composition of the poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Shortly thereafter, news of this incident reached friends of Dr. Beanes. When the initial efforts of residents of Upper Marlboro to secure his release had failed, they called upon Francis Scott Key, a lawyer then living in Georgetown (now a part of Washington), to intercede. Key, who was an intimate acquaintance of the doctor's, agreed to undertake this mission and left for Baltimore carrying letters of introduction officially sanctioning the undertaking.

In Baltimore, Francis Scott Key was joined by Col. John Skinner, who was a United States Government agent for arranging the transfer of prisoners. On September 5, 1814, the two Americans set sail from Baltimore for the Chesapeake Bay, where they expected to find the English fleet. Two days later they encountered the British on their way to attack Baltimore.

Key and Skinner boarded the *Tonnant*, flagship of the English Fleet, where they were courteously received by Admiral Cochrane and General Ross and invited to dine in the admiral's cabin. After dinner was served, Key opened negotiations with the British for the release of Dr. Beanes. At first the English were adamant in their resolve to transport Dr. Beanes to Halifax where they intended to punish him for allegedly violating his oath of good behavior.

During these early negotiations the Americans made little progress. Colonel Skinner, however, had carried with him a pouch of letters, written by British soldiers wounded at Bladensburg, extolling the excellent treatment they received at the hands of the Americans. This information tended to mollify the stubborn attitude maintained by the British, and after a brief discussion Admiral Cochrane agreed to release Dr. Beanes.

However, Key and Skinner, who had become aware of the British plans for the attack on Baltimore, were informed that for security reasons they would not be allowed to return to Baltimore until the British objective had been attained. Since the H. M. S. *Tonnant* was already overcrowded with British military personnel, the two Americans were transferred to

O say can you see, ~~through~~ by the dawn's early light,  
 what so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,  
 whose broad stripes & bright stars through the perilous fight  
 O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?  
 And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,  
 gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,  
 O say does that Star-spangled Banner yet wave  
 O'er the land of the free & the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,  
 where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
 what is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,  
 As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?

Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
 In full glory reflected now shines in the stream,  
 'Tis the Star-spangled Banner — O long may it wave  
 O'er the land of the free & the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,  
 That the havoc of war & the battle's confusion  
 A home & a Country should leave us no more?

~~Their~~ Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
 No refuge could save the hireling & slave  
 From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,  
 And the Star-spangled Banner in triumph doth wave  
 O'er the land of the free & the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand  
 Between their lov'd home & the war's desolation,  
 Bless'd with vict'ry & peace may the heav'n rescued land  
 Praise the power that hath made & preserved us a nation!  
 Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
 And this be our motto — "In God is our trust."  
 And the Star-spangled Banner in triumph shall wave  
 O'er the land of the free & the home of the brave.

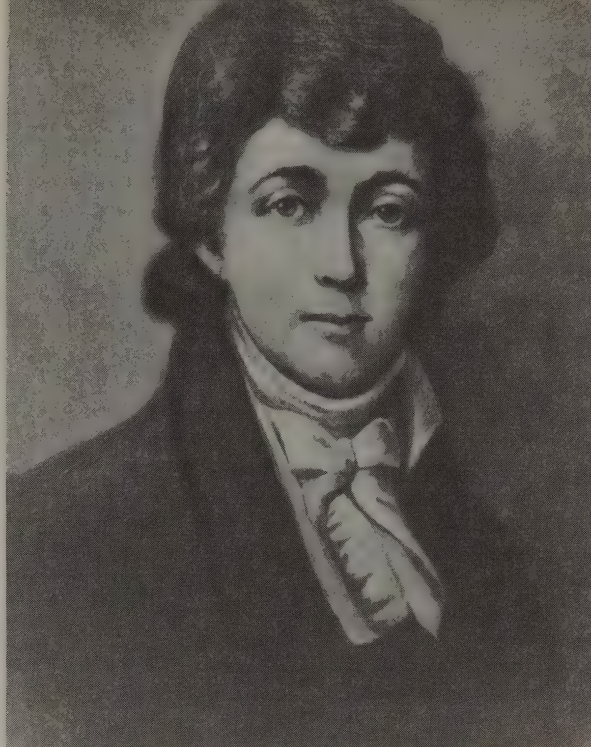
Facsimile of the manuscript draft of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Courtesy Walters Art Gallery.

the H. M. S. *Surprise*, a light frigate, where they remained until the fleet reached the mouth of the Patapsco.

The shallow Patapsco compelled Admiral Cochrane, who wished to take personal charge of the vessels assigned to attack the fort, to transfer his flag from the large 80-gun *Tonnant* to the smaller *Surprise*. Key and Skinner were then moved back to the small American boat on which they had sailed from Baltimore, and it was from this vessel, anchored somewhere to the rear of the British fleet, that Key witnessed the attack on Fort McHenry throughout the day of September 13 and that night.



*John Stafford Smith.*  
Courtesy British Museum.



*Francis Scott Key.* Courtesy the Flag House Association.

For Key, who was a true patriot, this 25-hour vigil was a period of intense emotional stress induced by fear, anxiety, and trepidation for the safety of his country, home State, and loved ones. His feelings are best described in his own words, from a speech he delivered years later at Frederick, Md., before a home-town audience:

I saw the flag of my country waving over a city—the strength and pride of my native State—a city devoted to plunder and desolation by its assailants. I witnessed the preparation for its assaults, and I saw the array of its enemies as they advanced to the attack. I heard the sound of battle; the noise of the conflict fell upon my listening ear, and told me that “the brave and the free” had met the invaders.

In the same speech, he described how his tense emotions were suddenly released at the sight of the American flag still waving defiantly over the ramparts of Fort McHenry at dawn on September 14—the symbol of American triumph which supplied Key with the spark of inspiration:

Through the clouds of the war the stars of that banner still shone in my view, and I saw the discomfited host of



## DEFENCE OF FORT M'HENRY.

The annexed song was composed under the following circumstances.—A gentleman had left Baltimore, in a flag of truce for the purpose of getting released from the British fleet, a friend of his who had been captured at Marlborough.—He went as far as the mouth of the Patuxent, and was not permitted to return lest the intended attack on Baltimore should be disclosed. He was therefore brought up the Bay to the mouth of the Patuxent, where the flag vessel was kept under the guns of a frigate, and he was compelled to witness the bombardment of Fort M'Henry, which the Admiral had boasted that he would carry in a few hours, and that the city must fall. He watched the flag at the Fort through the whole day with an anxiety that can be better felt than described, until the night prevented him from seeing it. In the night he watched the Bomb Shells, and at early dawn his eye was again greeted by the proudly waving flag of his country.

### THE ANACREON IN HEAVEN.

O! say can you see by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail'd at twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?  
And the Hero's red glare, the Bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there;  
O! say does that star-spangled Banner yet wave,  
O'er the Land of the free, and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering stamp,  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first-beam,  
In full glory reflected new shines in the stream,  
'Tis the star-spangled banner, O! long may it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,  
A home and a country, shall leave us no more?  
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave,  
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,  
O'er the Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave.

O! thus be it ever when freemen shall stand,  
Between their lov'd home, and the war's desolation,  
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land,  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto—"In God is our Trust;"  
And the star-spangled Banner in triumph shall wave,  
O'er the Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave.

*First appearance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in print,  
September 15, 1814. Courtesy Walters Art Gallery.*

its assailants driven back in ignominy to their ships. Then, in that hour of deliverance and joyful triumph, my heart spoke; and "Does not such a country and such defenders of their country deserve a song?" was its question. With it came an inspiration not to be resisted; and even though it had been a hanging matter to make a song, I must have written it. Let the praise, then, if any be due, be given, not to me, who only did what I could not help doing, not to the writer, but to the inspirers of the song!



*Portrait of Francis Scott Key by Charles Willson Peale.*

Courtesy Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.

Francis Scott Key started to write the first words of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the British terminated their attack against Fort McHenry. During his return to Baltimore, September 14, Key added lines to his poem, and that night revised and completed the original draft at the Fountain Inn, in Baltimore (a location now occupied by the Southern Hotel), where he is said to have spent the night.

The next morning, Key showed his verses to Judge Joseph H. Nicholson, of Baltimore, his wife's brother-in-law. The judge was so greatly impressed by the stirring quality of the poem that he either took the

# THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

A PATRIOTIC SONG.

Baltimore, Printed and Sold at CARBS Music Store 56 Baltimore Street.

Air, Anacreon in Heaven.

Con Spirito

O, say can you see by the dawn's early light, What so  
proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming, Whose broad stripes & bright stars thro'  
perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming, And the  
*f* Rockets' red glare, the Bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our  
(Tsch.) (Adapt. & Arr'd by T.C.) (Pl. 1.)

*The first printing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" with music.*

manuscript himself or sent it to the printing shop of the *Baltimore American*. Since the entire staff was absent on military duty at the time, the sole occupant of the shop was a young apprentice named Samuel Sands.

Sands ran Key's poem off in handbill form, and it was distributed to the citizens of Baltimore on September 15 under the title, "Defence of Fort McHenry." The first dated publication of the poem, again under the same title, appeared September 20 in the *Baltimore Patriot*. Shortly



after, the title was changed to "The Star-Spangled Banner." The family papers of Thomas Carr, a music publisher whose shop was at 36 Baltimore Street, state that he was the first to release the words and music of Key's poem under its present-day title in 1814.

Ferdinand Durang, an actor in Baltimore, may have been the first to sing the words to Key's poem in public. The melody to which the words were adapted is an old English tune originally written by John Stafford Smith, probably very shortly after 1770 and entitled "To Anacreon in Heaven." The occasion which inspired Smith to write this music was the founding in London of the Anacreontic Society.

This melody became popular not only in England but also in Ireland, where, with different words, it served as a drinking song. Later, the melody crossed the Atlantic. One of the earliest adaptations of this old English air in America was the Boston patriotic song by Thomas Paine, "Adams and Liberty," which appeared in 1797. Somewhat later, it was used with other words to the title "Jefferson and Liberty."

Proof of the popularity of this melody in America is the fact that it was adapted to more than 20 different songs. Two songs which were written in 1811 and 1813, respectively, that utilized the melodic theme of "To Anacreon in Heaven" and may have been known to Key, are "The Battle of the Wabash" and "When Death's Gloomy Angel Was Bending His Bow." The former celebrates the American victory at the battle of Tippecanoe, while the latter was written in commemoration of Washington's death for the first anniversary of the Washington Benevolent Society of Pennsylvania. Thus it is entirely conceivable that Francis Scott Key had the bars of the original old English air in mind when he wrote his poem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

### *Francis Scott Key*

Francis Scott Key was born to a family of substantial wealth on August 1, 1779, at the family estate, Terra Rubra, in the Monocacy Valley of western Maryland. At the age of 10, he entered the grammar school operated by St. John's College, in Annapolis, Md., and at 17 received his degree. Key remained in Annapolis to study law in the office of his uncle, Philip Barton Key, and to court Miss Mary Tayloe Lloyd, his future wife. In 1800, Key returned to western Maryland, and opened a law office in Frederick, not far from his birthplace. Five years later, at the suggestion of Philip Key, he moved to Georgetown, a suburb of Washington.

The decision proved to be fortunate. Key soon developed a lucrative law practice. He frequently appeared before the Supreme Court of the United States to argue cases significant in American legal history, and during Andrew Jackson's administration he was appointed United States district attorney.

Key did not permit his law practice to consume all his energies, however. He was also an active social worker. He helped organize the Lancaster Society for the free education of poor children in Georgetown. He was a charter member of the American Colonization Society, and he gave liberal financial support to those organizations he deemed worthy. Friends and strangers found him warm-hearted, generous, and eager to assist them in any way he could.

Francis Scott Key's benevolent nature was that of a profoundly religious man. At one time he seriously considered abandoning law for the ministry. He finally resolved, however, to seek solace for his conscience as an active member of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Throughout the span of his life, Key showed extreme tolerance toward other sects and creeds. His deeply religious outlook is reflected in his speeches, correspondence, and serious poetry. This deep-rooted piety, with his intense attachment to his country, conditioned Key's emotional response to the dramatic moment when he wrote the poem for which he is known—"The Star-Spangled Banner."

Although Key vigorously opposed the War of 1812, chiefly on religious grounds, he joined the Georgetown Field Artillery Company in 1813 and performed a tour of duty of 13 days. In 1814, he served as a volunteer aide to Gen. Walter Smith, who commanded a militia force during the American military debacle at Bladensburg.

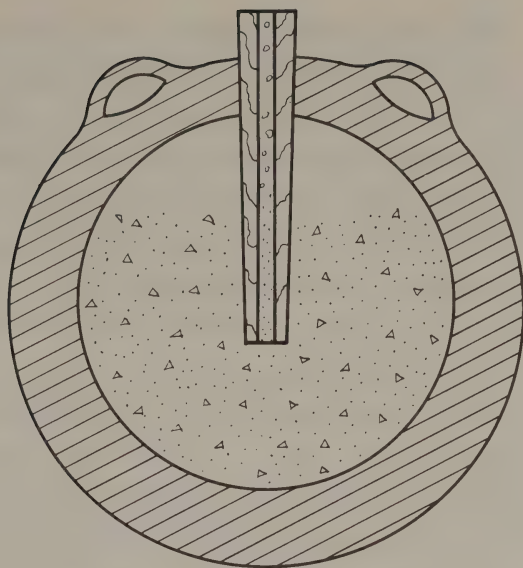
On January 11, 1843, while visiting his married daughter in Baltimore, Key died of pleurisy. He was buried in Baltimore, but, in 1866, his body was removed to Mount Olivet Cemetery in Frederick, Md., thus complying with a wish expressed by him.

### *"The Star-Spangled Banner" After 1815*

Though the popularity of "The Star-Spangled Banner" was immediate in Baltimore and the surrounding country, its acceptance by the American people as their national anthem was slow. In 1814, the song was printed in *The National Songster*, *The American Muse*, and the November issue of the *Analectic Magazine*. Such early publications of "The Star-Spangled Banner" omit the author's name and describe the piece as "a new song by a gentleman of Maryland." Between 1815 and 1861, various arrangements of this song were released, bearing imprints of our leading cities; but it was not until 1850 that it appeared in most songbooks for school and private use. By 1861, "The Star-Spangled Banner" had taken first rank among our national songs.

From the first, its most loyal partisans were the Army and the Navy. The wars in which we participated during the nineteenth century did as much as anything to increase the popularity of the song. During the War Between the States, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was claimed by





*Cross section of 13-inch bomb.*

both the North and the South. At Fort Sumter, where the opening shot of the war was fired, this song was played when the American flag was lowered in token of surrender by the Federal forces. In indignation over this episode, Oliver Wendell Holmes added a fifth stanza to the song which appeared in northern editions of songbooks of the period. It was again played at the raising of the American flag following the reoccupation of Fort Sumter with the conclusion of this war. On other occasions it was also played by bands of the armed services—at Manila Bay following Dewey's naval victory over the Spanish, and at Hawaii when it was annexed as a territory of the United States.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was heartily accepted by the American people. For this reason, in 1889, the Navy Department ordered the adoption of the song for band music at morning colors. The Army instituted a similar practice. In 1904, Secretary of War Moody ordered the substitution of "The Star-Spangled Banner" for "Hail Columbia," which heretofore had been played with the lowering of the flag in the evening.

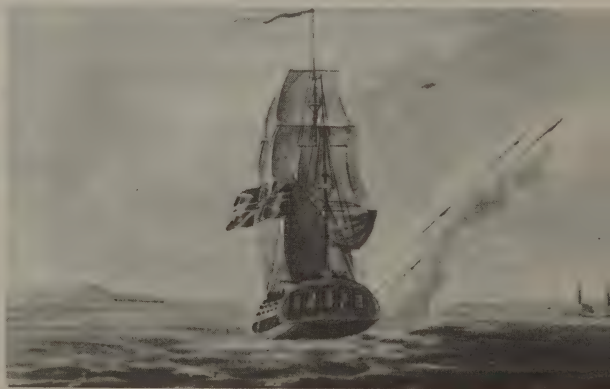
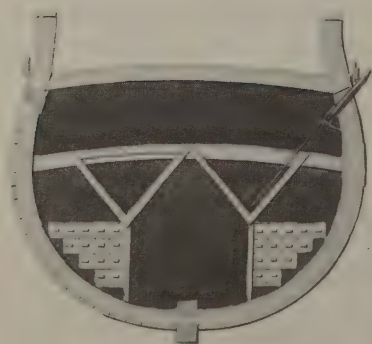
During the period between 1904 and 1918, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was widely played in and outside the services. The entrance of America into the First World War was all that was needed for this song to become so universally accepted that a drive could be commenced in Congress to make it our official national anthem. Though a resolution to do this was introduced in the House of Representatives in 1913, the first concerted effort was made in 1918 by Congressman Linthicum, of Maryland, when he introduced a bill to bring this about. In this endeavor, he had the support of many patriotic organizations.

The battle to win approval for the bill was not, however, destined to be easy. Congressmen were badgered with petitions suggesting that such songs as "Yankee Doodle," "Hail Columbia," and particularly "America the Beautiful" which was the other chief contender for the honor, were better suited to be our national anthem. The reasons for opposition to Linthicum's bill were numerous, and even today some Americans still express similar sentiments. With much justification, many felt the music of "The Star-Spangled Banner" was too difficult for the average voice to master; moreover, the tune was borrowed. If one were able to sing the melody, the peculiar meter made it difficult to memorize the words.

Furthermore, the opposition to the adoption of the bill was reinforced both by temperance groups and Anglophiles. Some Americans were aghast at the thought of the adoption of this song as our national anthem because of the earlier use of the melody with drinking songs. Others felt that the sentiments expressed by the song were foreign to genuine Americanism. They also feared that the cordial relations existing between Britain and the United States might be seriously jeopardized by such lines as "Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps pollution," from the third stanza. Such partisans in this struggle felt that for these reasons it would be poor national policy, bad taste, and harmful to the morals and outlook of young school children were this song to win official sanction from the Congress of the United States.

The strength of these lobby groups is revealed by the fact that Congressman Linthicum introduced five similar bills prior to passage of the sixth to make "The Star-Spangled Banner" our official national anthem. Additional evidence of opposition to the adoption of this bill was the national anthem song-writing contest of 1928, sponsored in New York City. Just as there was precedent enough for holding such a contest, the first one known having been held in 1806 by the Militia Military

*Rocket ship.* Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.





Association of Philadelphia, the dismal failure of such earlier efforts portended a similar fate for this final contest. Forty-five hundred manuscripts were submitted for the \$3,000 prize, but no decision was ever reached.

Between 1918 and 1931, evidence of public support for the adoption of Congressman Linthicum's bill was impressively illustrated by the ever-increasing number of civic and patriotic organizations endorsing this measure. The unstinting perseverance of Linthicum was finally rewarded on March 3, 1931, by an act of Congress which made "The Star-Spangled Banner" our official national anthem.

### *British Bombs*

The bombs and rockets which are commemorated in our national anthem were not the creation of a poet's imagination. In 1814, the bomb was the most potent weapon and the rocket the most spectacular in Britain's naval arsenal. Contemporary accounts bear witness to the profound impression which these missiles made upon the residents of Baltimore as they apprehensively witnessed the attack on Fort McHenry.

The massive bombs hurled against the fort were gradually developed from the crude hand grenade and primitive incendiary carcass. By 1814, they were the chief naval weapon employed against fixed shore installations. The bomb was a hollow, cast-iron sphere up to 13 inches in diameter, which, according to Falconer, "destroys the most substantial buildings by its weight, and, bursting asunder, creates the greatest disorder and mischief by its splinters." A 13-inch bomb weighed about 190 pounds and had walls 1.5 inches thick. It carried a bursting charge of about 9 pounds of powder. The amount of powder varied, depending on the type of fragmentation desired.

*Rocket launchers on small boats.* Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.





*Plan of Fort McHenry made in 1819, showing the fort substantially as it must have been in 1814.*

The fuse which ignited the bomb was a simple tapered piece of wood, 8.52 inches long. A channel was drilled lengthwise through the wood and packed with finely mealed powder.

To prepare the bomb for firing, it was necessary to pour the proper amount of powder into the bomb through the fuse hole. A fuse was then driven tightly into the hole, care being taken to avoid splitting the wood. The burning time of the fuse was regulated by cutting back on its lower end.

The bomb was fired by a short, heavy, muzzle-loading mortar which weighed over 8,000 pounds. With a full powder charge and elevated to 45°, it was capable of hurling a bomb 4,200 yards (2.38 miles). The piece rested on a massive bed or carriage which, in turn, was supported by powerful upright timbers. The bed could be rotated in traverse by handspikes.

To fire the weapon, a charge was inserted, then a wad, and lastly the bomb. Earth was usually packed between the bore of the weapon and the missile to make it fit tighter and thus increase the range. The gunner then pricked the powder charge, inserted a primer into the touch-hole of the mortar, and, upon receiving the order to fire, applied a slow match or portfire to the primer. The resulting explosion both ignited the fuse and discharged the bomb. A more certain but slightly more hazardous method was to load the bomb so that the fuse could be lit separately before the mortar was fired.

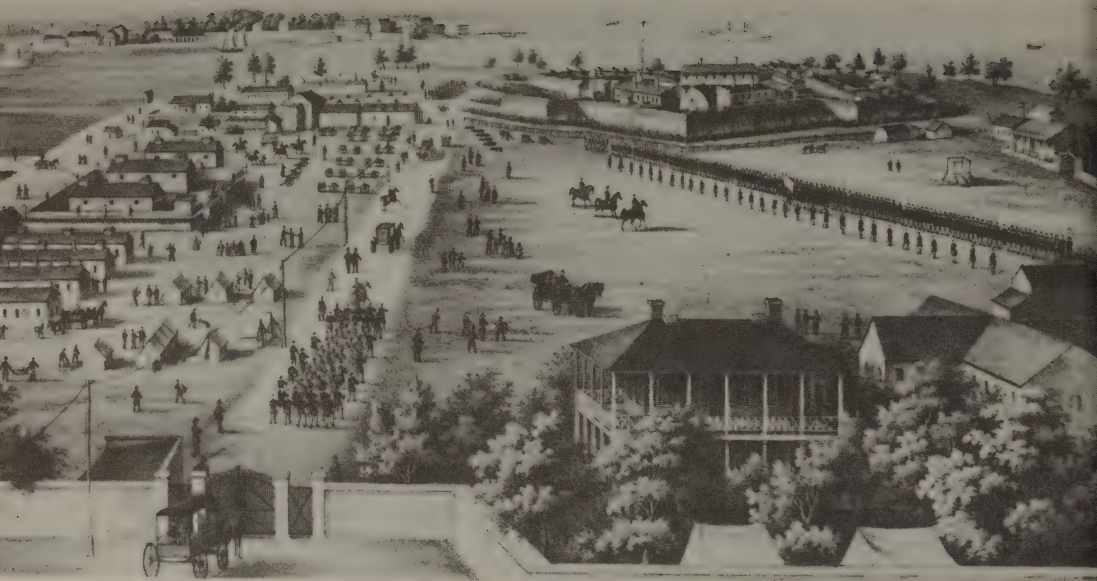
Since the regular warship could not withstand the terrific shock of recoil caused by the mortar when fired, it was necessary to design a special type of vessel. The bomb ship was constructed of massive timbers and reinforced by powerful beams. Its main armament consisted of a 10- and a 13-inch mortar. In addition, the vessel carried a secondary armament of 10 guns or carronades. H. M. S. *Aetna*, one of the bomb ships which attacked Fort McHenry, had a length of 102 feet and a breadth of 29 feet, and displaced 367 tons.

### *British Rockets*

The rockets used against the fort in 1814 were designed by William Congreve, who, intrigued by the military potentialities of self-propelled missiles, began his experiments in 1804 with the largest skyrockets then available in London. By substituting iron for paper in the construction of the body, reducing the length of the balancing shaft, and improving the black powder propelling charge, Congreve was able to introduce a military rocket with an extreme range of 3,000 yards. After an initial failure, the British successfully employed incendiary rockets against Boulogne in 1806, and thereafter the weapon was employed by both the Army and Navy with satisfactory results. In 1812, the War Office established an independent rocket unit.

British land and naval forces employed the rocket frequently during the Chesapeake campaign. At Bladensburg, they stampeded the inexperienced American militia; but at North Point they were ineffectual, and at Fort McHenry they failed as a military weapon. It is ironic to note that after a long string of successes the rocket is commemorated in a poem which was inspired by an occasion on which they failed miserably.





*Fort McHenry in 1865.* Courtesy Enoch Pratt Library.

The 32-pound rocket, which was customarily used by the British Navy, consisted of a cylindrical body 42 inches long and 4 inches in diameter. Attached securely to the body was a 15-foot-long stabilizing shaft which had been carefully inspected for signs of warping. Congreve designed three types of interchangeable warheads for the rocket—incendiary, case shot, and explosive.

“Since the rocket can project itself without reaction upon the point whence it departs,” Congreve was able to design very light and mobile devices to launch the missile. If necessary, the rocket could be placed on the ground and launched in the direction of the target. For an elevated trajectory, the rocket was placed on a slope or its shaft was inserted in a hole. The smaller missiles were usually launched from a hollow copper tube supported by a tripod, from a troughlike chamber set on the ground, or from a simple launcher mounted on the cart in which the rockets were carried. Congreve also designed a ladderlike frame to fire the larger rockets.

In the Navy, this frame, when used on small boats, was divested of its legs and supported by a mast which was raised and lowered by hal-yards. The rockets, when launched from the ladder-type frame, were activated by a flintlock mechanism, which was attached to the frame, and operated by a long lanyard.

The *Erebus*, one of the ships which participated in the attack on Fort McHenry, was equipped with a 32-pound rocket battery which had been installed below the main deck. She was formerly a 20-gun sloop-rigged vessel whose hull had been pierced to permit the passage of rockets.

Small portholes or “scuttles” were provided similar to those used for the ship’s guns.

Congreve was supremely confident that the rocket would supplant the cumbersome gun as the standard artillery piece. He based his optimism on several attractive characteristics of self-propelled weapons. They were simple and economical to manufacture; light and mobile; able to be used in any terrain; and, best of all, the rocket dispensed with the heavy, expensive, awkward gun.

However, Congreve did not realize his dream during his lifetime. The notorious inaccuracy of the missile in flight destroyed its value as an artillery piece. Congreve continually experimented in an effort to remove this defect, which was inherent in the type of rocket he had designed. When he failed to develop an accurate self-propelled missile, military men relegated the rocket to the position of a secondary weapon. They used it only for its demoralizing effect on inexperienced troops, who were often panicked by its eerie appearance and appalling noise in flight.

After 1815, the radical improvement of weapons, powder, and projectiles caused the gradual abandonment of the rocket as a military weapon until World War II, when powerful self-propelled missiles in many forms were designed and used very effectively.

### *Fort McHenry After 1814*

In the period after the conclusion of the War of 1812, two factors tended to diminish the military value of Fort McHenry. The development of new and more powerful types of weapons, powder, and projectiles rendered the defense works obsolete, and the rapid postwar expansion of Baltimore’s harbor below the fort minimized the strategic importance of Whetstone Point.

Surveys of coast defenses were made in 1818 and 1820, and it was recommended that the War Department abandon Fort McHenry in favor of newer and more strategically located forts. Though newer harbor defenses were constructed, Fort McHenry, which never came under fire again after 1814, continued to make its contributions in every subsequent war.

It served as a regular garrison post until July 20, 1912, when it was finally deactivated. During the Mexican War, Maryland troops were trained there. From 1861 to 1865, Fort McHenry was used as a detention camp for persons under investigation for suspected pro-Southern sentiments and as a prison camp for captured Confederate soldiers. In the Spanish-American War, troops were trained at the fort and embarked from there for foreign service.



*Fort McHenry from the air.*

In the years that intervened after the fort's magnificent defense of the city of Baltimore, many physical improvements were necessary. For 20 years, facilities were permitted to deteriorate. Then, in 1835, Brigadier General Fenwick reported that not a gun was mounted; the gun carriages and platforms were decayed; and the water batteries were worthless. This gloomy report stirred the War Department to action. Modern weapons and carriages were emplaced on the bastions of the star fort. The barracks were repaired and raised to two full stories. In this period, the present outer battery was started and the old batteries torn down.

During the Civil War, the outer battery was armed with more powerful weapons, some of which are still in their original places. The case-mate magazines for this battery were also constructed. In 1873, work was started on a powerful new battery designed to accommodate 25 15-inch guns. Three years later, the War Department suspended this project and it was never completed. By the turn of the century, the absence of modern artillery pieces at the fort made it necessary to transport the garrison to other posts for firing practice.

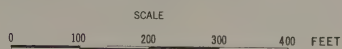
The city of Baltimore leased the area in 1914 for use as a municipal park. It consisted of 47 acres of land to which the Federal Government had held complete title since 1836. Today there are 43 acres. In 1917, however, the area was restored to the War Department, and a large military hospital was constructed outside the star fort.

In 1925, pursuant to a Federal law, this reservation was dedicated as Fort McHenry National Park and a restoration program was initiated by the Army. All temporary and permanent structures, except the Civil War Magazine in the northwest section of the area, were removed and the old barracks buildings within the star fort altered to correspond to their appearance in the late 1830's.

In 1933, Fort McHenry National Park, which designation was changed in 1939 to national monument and historic shrine, was transferred from the Army to the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, with the unusual stipulation that: "The Secretary of War may, in case



# FORT MCHENRY



## LEGEND

- A Quarters for commanding officer and aide
- B Powder magazine
- C Quarters for officers
- D & E Barracks for troops
- F Bombproofs and Guardhouse
- G Casemate Magazine
- + 1812 Period Guns
- + 1855-1877 Period Guns



January, 1950 N. M. McH. 7001



*The Armistead statue overlooking Baltimore Harbor.*

of a national emergency, close the said Fort McHenry and use it for any and all military purposes during the period of the emergency." In conformity with this provision, the historic fort performed limited service during World War II when part of the area was assigned temporarily to the Navy and used for a fire-control school.

### *Fort McHenry Today*

Physically, the old fort is a fine example of the military architecture of the eighteenth century. It is laid out on the plan of a regular pentagon with a bastion at each angle, forming, in effect, a five-pointed star. A barbette work with brick masonry, it is scarp capped with a heavy, projecting granite coping, the corners of the bastions being of sandstone.

*The muzzles of two guns flank the Stars and Stripes as seen from the outer walls of Fort McHenry.*





Each front measures about 290 feet between the points of the bastions. The parade is a regular pentagon of about 150 feet on each side, surrounded by a well-laid granite wall about 5 feet high supporting the rampart, in front of which a brick masonry foundation about 3 feet high, with sandstone coping over sheet zinc, acts as a retaining wall for the curtain of sodded earth extending to the top of the scarped exterior parapet. The level of the parade is about 33 feet above the low mean watermark, and the top of the bank above the scarped walls is about 45 feet. A wide ditch, 13 feet below the coping of the masonry wall, surrounds the fort. The ditch was never used as a water moat and, in fact, parts of it were never completed.

The fort is entered through an arched sally port, which is flanked on both sides by bombproofs. Within the fort the buildings now used as museums may be identified as follows:

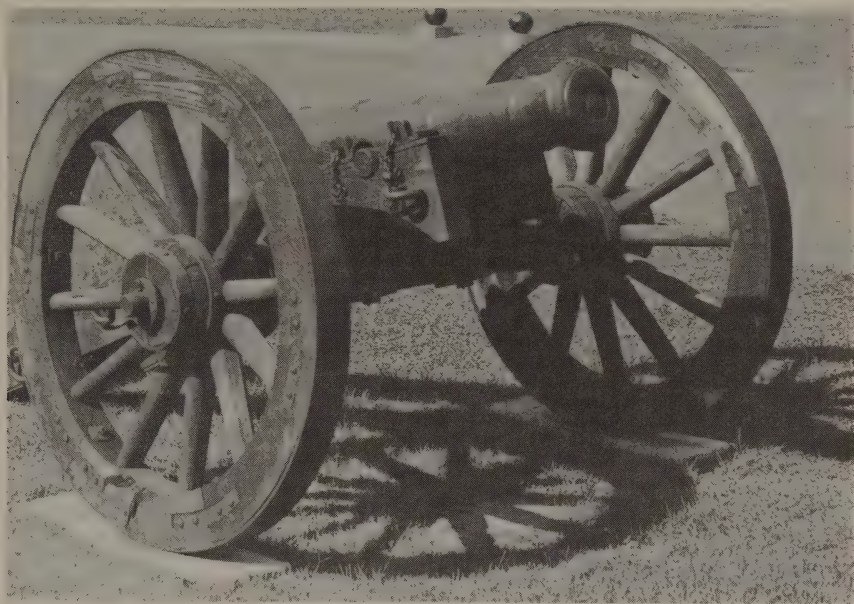
- A—Quarters for commanding officer and his adjutant or aide
- B—Powder magazine with masonry walls and roof 13 feet thick
- C—Quarters for officers
- D and E—Barracks for troops.

From the ramparts near the flagstaff, from which the flag flies 24 hours a day by authority of a Presidential proclamation issued July 2, 1948, one can look down upon the Patapsco River, where, in 1814, the British fleet was stationed during the historic bombardment.

Immediately opposite the sally port, on the outside of the star fort, is a detached triangular bastion of the same general appearance and construction as the main fort. This outer work served as additional protection to the fort entrance. Originally, the fort was entered by a wooden bridge reaching from this bastion to the sally port. Another bridge connected the bastion with the approach roadway. Under the bastion is a bombproof powder magazine.

Among the differences between the fort of 1814 and that of today, the following may be noted: The brick retaining wall on the firing step was not present in 1814; the bastions were planked; the moat on the south or outer side was shallow; buildings A and E were not of the same dimensions as today; and buildings in the fort in 1814 were of one and a half stories.

In 1914, the one-hundredth anniversary of the defense of Fort McHenry and of the composition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," Congress appropriated \$75,000 for the erection of a monument in memory of Francis Scott Key and the soldiers and sailors who participated in the battle of North Point and in the defense of Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. In that year also the National Star-Spangled Banner Association was given authority to erect a monument in memory of Maj. George Armistead. The monument to Key—a heroic bronze figure



*A field piece of the War of 1812 period.*

of Orpheus—was not completed until 1922, because of the First World War. The Armistead monument is a bronze portrait figure standing on the southeast salient of the outer work.

## *Museums*

The five buildings in the fort proper are now used principally for museum purposes. They are designated by the letters A to E, beginning at the right of the entrance inside the fort. In 1936, the National Society of the Daughters of 1812 gave a collection of replicas of old furniture such as were probably used in the commanding officer's headquarters. This furniture is on display in Building A, which served as headquarters building during the bombardment of 1814. In 1935, the E. Berkley Bowie Collection of weapons, consisting of about 400 pieces, was donated to the fort by the Maryland Society of 1812. This collection is housed on the first floor of Building D. In the same building, on the second floor, are a collection of antique furniture, a number of original flags, and exhibit material on the composition and subsequent history of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In 1939, a successful campaign was launched to purchase for the fort the painting, "'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner." The painting now hangs upstairs in Building E, where it is the central feature of the Star-Spangled Banner Room. On the same floor is the Armistead Exhibit, featuring

original letters to that gallant soldier. Downstairs in the same building is located a large relief map showing the position of the British Fleet during the bombardment in relation to Fort McHenry and Baltimore. Other exhibits and relics are located in Buildings D and E.

### *How to Reach the Fort*

Fort McHenry is situated in Baltimore, about 3 miles from the center of the city, and is readily accessible, via East Fort Avenue.

### *Services to the Public*

The area is open to the public on weekdays from 7:30 a. m. to 5:30 p. m.; on Sundays from 9 a. m. to 5:30 p. m. The museum hours are from 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. EST.

A nominal admission fee is charged visitors 12 years of age or over, except for members of school groups. When accompanied by adults assuming responsibility for their safety and orderly conduct, children under 12 years of age and groups of school children between the ages of 12 and 18 are admitted free.

Organizations or groups are given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the superintendent.

### *Related Areas*

The two other areas administered by the National Park Service directly related to the War of 1812 are Chalmette National Historical Park, in Louisiana, which commemorates Jackson's victory at New Orleans, and Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial National Monument, Put-in-Bay, Ohio, commemorating the great naval victory of Lake Erie.

### *Administration*

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Baltimore 30, Md.





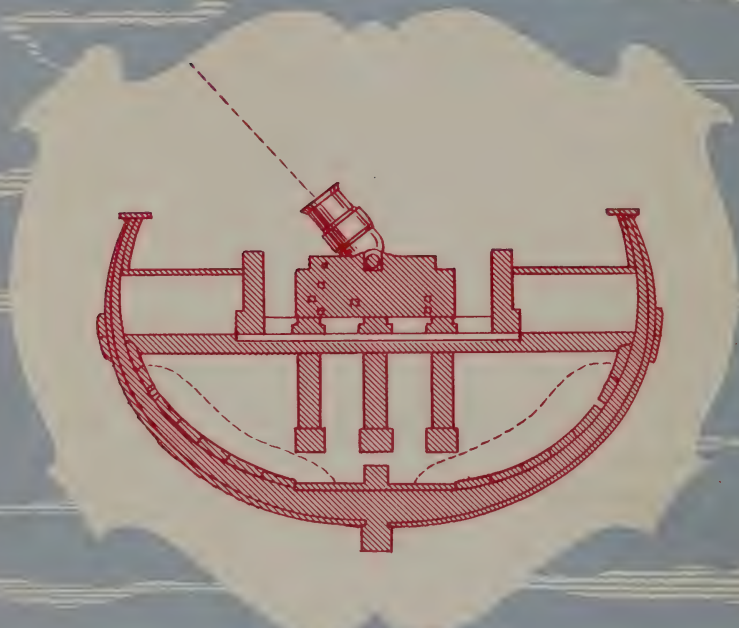


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*Cross section of bomb ship showing mortar and supporting structure.*







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